

FORUM

Internal Party Journal of the S.P.G.B.

No. 4

JANUARY 1953

SIXPENCE

A NEW FORM OF CENSORSHIP

THE four letters that contain objections to the June editorial under the above title miss the point of the editorial, which was to show that a line of trade union action had commenced which, if not nipped in the bud, might blossom into something extremely dangerous to the working class movement. This line of action was press censorship by workers in the printing trade, from which we had already suffered, and which added to the burden workers already had to bear through open and veiled forms of censorship inspired by capitalist interests.

The article made perfectly clear that this was the only point with which it was dealing, and not the Thomson dispute. The time to make a statement on the point was while the matter was still fresh, and the point had to be driven home if it was dealt with at all. That workers heatedly concerned in a particular dispute may fail to grasp, or may misunderstand our attitude when trying to drive an important point home is something we are always up against, and will always be up against, until the working class absorbs our attitude. Striking examples were the anger at our opposition to war with Nazi Germany and the censorship of an article on monarchy by the workers employed by our printers.

Now to come to the particular objections. We will deal with them as far as space will allow.

To Kingston Branch

Kingston Branch considers that the article "expresses a point of view unworthy of our Party". What was the point of view? Opposition to censorship! Is this unworthy of our Party? The branch later on says "We endorse the demand for freedom of the Press and for freedom of speech" and then contradicts this statement by arguing that they only want freedom of the Press for one point of view, the one they favour, and not freedom of the Press for the point of view they oppose—that of the "class enemies."

The workers in the printing trade are always printing matter that is detrimental to their class interests as well as matter that is favourable. If Alexander Publications' workers had struck work in support of

Thomson's workers they would have stopped all printing—that would not have been Press censorship. Surely the branch can see the fundamental difference. That would have been the line to take to defend Thomson's workers and discouraging other employers from following his lead. More so if *all* printing trade workers had followed this line.

The branch says, farther on, "There was no attempt at censorship; just a plain refusal to assist a class enemy", etc. What kind of English or logic is this? So the printing workers did not censor our article; it was only a plain refusal to assist their class friends! To call the action of the Alexander workers a strike and not censorship is absurd. They could have put their point of view alongside that of the opposition but did not do so. To compare their action with that of dockers who refuse to handle a particular type of goods is equally absurd, because the printers employed by other papers did not refuse to handle a particular type of print, in fact they gave publicity to Alexander's protest. But the example is not on the same level, for quite other reasons which have already been indicated.

The branch holds that the examples given of cycling trade unionists striking against handling motor cars, etc., are ridiculous. Hasn't it occurred to the branch that there are numbers of workers who hold the view that motor vehicles are mainly responsible for the thousands of people who are killed and maimed on the roads each year, greater than many wars, and who may think this accident rate of more importance than even the Thomson dispute itself? However, the examples were only given to illustrate the chaos that would ensue if workers in general started striking over the constitution of the product instead of over the wages and conditions of labour. The branch should have looked at it from that point of view, as other readers did.

It is a pity the branch allows its vision to be distorted by bias. We don't, and the editorial did not, urge "workers to print their class enemies propaganda"; we simply urge printing workers not to start on the road of censorship and we give the reasons why it will only harm themselves in the long run. The

last two paragraphs of the editorial which did not appear in the FORUM extract contain the essence of our article. The branch makes the fatuous statement "Let the capitalist put over his point of view. Let him print it" etc. Does the capitalist do the printing and the rest? Of course not. The workers handle all the technical equipment necessary for these different purposes. So what the branch is really saying is: let the capitalist do all these things because we know he can't!

To C. C. Groves

The answers to Groves' three points need no enlargement as they have already been covered in the reply to Kingston Branch.

1. We did not tell workers that they should give every assistance to their employers in a dispute.
2. The analogy does not fit because the workers are always loading the rifles of their opponents; capitalism would cease if they didn't! Anyhow, the other workers in the printing trade printed Alexander's protest, so why no fury about that?
3. As already pointed out, the editorial quite clearly distinguishes what it is concerned with, and that this had no bearing on the Thomson dispute itself. We always condemn actions that we consider are harmful to working class interests and support those we consider are helpful. The action in question happened to be one of the harmful ones, and accordingly it was our business to say so, regardless of the unpopularity of the point of view.

Seeing that there is as much fervour over the Thomson dispute how comes it that nobody thought of writing it up? The editorial committee is not the "Lord High Everything Else." We needed an editorial and the subject was considered of sufficient importance by the writer to merit strong comment—and this is still his view.

To J. Trotman

Trotman doubts if such an article serves any useful purpose and thinks that it should be carefully written and approached from a different angle.

If the editorial contributes towards clear thinking and towards nipping in the bud a censorship line of action it will have served a useful purpose. As to the implications that the editorial was not "very carefully" written, it is a pity that Trotman has not indicated definitely what he meant by this slur. The editorial was carefully written. On this point and the further one about sympathy for the workers, etc., we would direct his attention to the second paragraph of the editorial and to the last three paragraphs as originally printed. For the rest the editorial was intended to be read along with the other matter we print and not in isolation. When dealing with a particular question there is a limit to what can reasonably be included. To include all that Trotman appears to desire would have enlarged the article beyond reasonable dimensions. As it stands we fail to see how it could create a false impression in the minds of any but those who wanted to have that impression. It is a straightforward statement on a particular point of vital importance to the workers, and it does not pretend to be more than that.

To E. Lake

Lake objects that the editorial fails to give a balanced view; the fourth paragraph of the editorial, however, points out the obstacles Capitalism sets up and urges the printing workers not to add to the burden. The heaviness of hand is only the insistence on the full and free expression of opinion in order that the workers may be better armed in their fight for emancipation. The editorial also specifically recognises that "Those who seek to suppress opinion that offends them are

moved by intentions that, to themselves, appear to be in the best interests of humanity."

Lake also appears to have misunderstood the objects of the four examples, which were given merely to illustrate what could happen if workers started a policy of striking over the constitution of the product. But still we can't let him run away with the meat. Quite a number of vegetarians (using the term in a general sense) hold the view that meat is the direct cause of diseases such as cancer, that ravage the population, and that it is the basis of numerous complaints of a serious nature. Maybe some of the vegetarians are trade unionist meat porters and may recognise the Gilbertian situation they are in. After all, workers can't always choose the trade they have to follow to get a living.

As to the examples of chemists, etc., refusing to do certain particular things—they do not fit because the point in question was what would happen if the workers started on a general policy of striking over the constitution of the product of labour. Neither support nor condemnation has anything to do with that point.

Finally, Lake gives (presumably in opposition to the argument in the editorial against Press censorship by printing works) the possibility of some jingo press owner attempting to incite a mob, etc. This reminds the writer of the star question at the tribunals during the first world war: "Would you defend your mother if she were attacked?" If the answer was "Yes", back came the quick retort "Then you are not opposed to war". The writer hates the filthy stuff and the lies and hypocrisy that printing workers have to

print in newspaper, periodicals and books but he would far rather see that stuff in than risk censorship of his freedom to refute those things and to explain our outlook.

We do lay down a general policy of Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Speech and we oppose interference with this freedom. We are not, of course, absolutists. We recognise that there may be border-line cases, but the action the editorial was discussing was not a border-line case—it had been applied to us. But let us carry Lake's idea a little farther.

In present society the means of production are owned by a privileged group, the capitalist class, who are thereby enabled to live on the surplus value extracted from the workers' labour. The interests of the workers are therefore opposed to the interests of the owners of the means of production. But wait. Hold on a moment. We can't make sweeping statements like that. What about the man round the corner who owns his own little forge? He works for himself, employs no one and therefore cannot live on the surplus value extracted from the workers. "It is self-evident that we cannot lay down a general policy opposing" the owners of the means of production. "We must consider and decide upon such cases as they arise." Now where are we?

Of course we can lay down general policies of opposition, in spite of the possibility that we may run up against border-line cases once in a while.

Censorship is an evil thing, no matter who applies it. Full and free discussion is the basis of sound understanding.

G. McCLATCHIE.

THE NATURE OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

3 Homo Sapiens

THE special genius of man is his infinite capacity for making tools. He has been defined as the tool-making animal. He has also been defined by Marx as the *zoon politikon* and by others as the religious animal. All with equal justification. So let us have a try at description and leave the definitions to add up for themselves.

Men's special genetic endowment includes an upright posture, opposable thumbs, a pound of brains, extraordinary social sensitivity, acute colour vision, and prolonged post-natal dependence, no single one of which alone accounts for man's dominion over palm and pine. An organism is a unitary field of forces whose parts all contribute to its particular mode of living—in our case a form of co-operative labour which permits survival in a wider range of circumstances than is possible for any other creature. It is no single physical feature, but their combination, which lifts man on to the escalator of history by the creation of means of production (including language).

Not even the brain. The human brain could not work to capacity without human thumbs or without the other special features.

The restless, manipulative hands, the discriminating eyes, feed the brain; the brain, digesting multiple sensation into general sense, informs the senses; prolonged infantile dependence evokes a subtlety of emotional cries—of helplessness, succour, affection, rebuke and play—which are stylised into language by the necessities of co-operative labour. Language steps up thinking to more abstract levels, raises consciousness to consciousness of consciousness, gives birth to the "I" which sees and transcends me, and to the giddy paradox of infinity, the horrifying revelation of self in opposition to the world, which buttresses the need for kinship—out of language, out of social labour come God and the monstrous ego which whimpers for fellowship. The picture of man as an animal with a big brain is good enough for the nineteenth century Rationalist, but hardly good enough for the

socialist. He has a big brain because he has big hands, a big heart, and a talking tongue—each giving birth in congress with the others, multiplying to the total psyche which is man with hands, who thinks, and dare not be alone.

Sensation and Thinking

We must ascribe to all living things a quality we call sensation or sensibility. At the lowest level of life, the single cell responds to stimuli in a relatively simple, generalised way. The more complex multicellular organisms develop, by division of labour, special sensitivities, special senses; they develop at the same time mechanisms for co-ordinating the separate sensations, in a central nervous system. The more highly developed organisms are not simply bundles of simple cells, but bundles of systems, and bundles of systems of systems, where co-ordination of sensations takes place both within each system and between the systems, and integration therefore occurs at various levels, giving successive integrations of integrations.

What we call "thinking" results from the activity (or is the activity) of the supreme co-ordinator of co-ordinators. The cat's brain is a platoon of co-ordinators, the gorilla's a division, man's an army. The difference between the final co-ordination in men's and in the cat's brain is the difference between a world dictator and a parish clerk. The function of the co-ordinator is to register the general effect of a number of different simultaneous sensations, to abstract the general impression; the function of the co-ordinators of co-ordinators is to bring the more primary generalisations to a common focus, and at each successive level the abstraction is more general, the generalisation is more abstract, the focus sharper. The cat's final generalisation is so relatively blunt and blurred, it comprehends in such a relatively vague and shapeless way, that that we say that it doesn't really "think", it still only "feels" a situation. Men's final generalisation is so highly distilled, the final focus so sharp, that, like a point which has no area or an edge which has no thickness, it almost loses the quality of feeling. It remains, however, that while the cat can focus its feelings only into a dim, shapeless thinking, on the other hand man's thinking is only the more refined focal point of feeling.

This abstraction of a general quality, whether at lower or higher levels, is therefore not so much the activity of a separate "faculty" as the residual effect of multiple sensibility. The nervous co-ordinator can do no other than register the general effect, because it brings them to a focus and they blur into one another, as whiteness is the combined general effect of bringing all the colours to a focus. And the greater the range and refinement of the sensations received together, the clearer white will be the distilled thinking, the less grey-muddied with the silt of primary sensation.

Brain and Consciousness

The brain of man is such a vast hierarchy of co-ordinators, vested in spinal chord, thalamus, posterior and frontal lobes, and the final abstractions therefore so highly refined, so far removed from primary sensation, such pale attenuated ghosts of feeling, so near evaporation point, that they are difficult to retain or recall in the mind unless reconverted into sensual form, of sign or sound. The thick body of feeling communicates itself in the stance, the mien and the attitude: the idea, sense abstracted, must utter itself or it dies on the moment.

And while thinking is only the focal tip of the mental pyramid it is also therefore the most mobile. The lower, less conscious, levels are less fleeting and change less fitfully, change only with the slow accretion of silt left by the stream of experience. Learning, indeed, is a process of becoming unconscious. We have learned something when it no longer requires the conscious effort of attention, when we no longer have to think about it. Repetition builds responses lower and lower into the new situation of the changing moment. But the more our responses are learnt, the more

unconsciously they come, the more imperative they are, and the more natural they feel.

What we know therefore exerts a tremendous gravitational pull on what we are trying to know, or are faced with, to the point of distorting it into what we already know. Our appraisal of the new is highly selective. It cannot be dispassionate. What I know is sanctified by becoming me, and my conscious surface readily absorbs what fits me, at the expense of what doesn't. The "inarticulate major premisses" of our thinking are those sentiments which have been built into the unconscious. They are inarticulate because they are unconscious, and they are imperative for the same reason. The mind tends to see only what it already knows.

Problems of Communication

Thinking is not a separate class of mental phenomena, but a refinement of sensation, by abstraction at successive levels. And mind does not consist of feeling on the one hand and thinking on the other, but of integration at various levels, that is, generalisation in varying degrees. A distinction between thinking and feeling may be valid for valid purposes, but their separation may be as misleading as the false separation of "economic base" and "social superstructure", not only by teasing us with the same kind of irresolvable questions as to which comes first (whether we think because we feel or feel because we think) but still more by obscuring the nature of communication between men, something we as propagandists ought to know something about.

In practice our propagandists often do know something about it, intuitively and empirically, as the actor, the politicians, the salesman, the grafter, the clairvoyant or the "con" man does. And we tend to think of thinking as "pure reason" and to meet our audience in the worst way, head on, because we don't know clearly enough that the human mind—the bloke we're talking to—is a unique and alien structure of sentiment, sentiments more or less unconscious, axiomatic, imperative, personal and precious. You can't argue with a sentiment, and the revolutionary Socialist attitude is essentially incommunicable, propaganda, virtually impotent. To learn this is to learn at the same time the real function of the Socialist movement and to discover the residual history-creative spark of propaganda.

This will be discussed again. For the moment just two more words, one about language and religion, and one about language and history.

Religion is Reflection

So far as religion is concerned we may well say that in the beginning was the word, for God is the word. Language enables conscious-

ness to hear itself, and thus make men conscious of being conscious. We may concede that the cat thinks, after its fashion, but not that it thinks that it thinks. And God, in the end, is the "I" that sees and transcends me, it is man knowing that he is, and it is only by seeing this "knowing" as verbal that we expose the trick. For where, if not in God, lies the beginning or the end of the "infinite regression", the consciousness of consciousness of consciousness . . . as two parallel mirrors reflect in indefinite series their reciprocal reflections of reflections. It lies in the finely pointed thinking which projects and concretises itself in language, whereby human thinking turns and looks at itself, creates its own image in parallel. Men's reflection on reflection is the echo of the word.

It has been said that all philosophy is the product of bad grammar, meaning that it arises from deficiencies of language, the unconscious sleight of hand which rings the changes on words and meaning. But deeper than this, philosophy arises from the very fact of language, because it is the source of the fundamental philosophical dilemma of men, the inconceivable concept of infinity which mocks and tantalises sense, and is the origin likewise of the deceitful dualism which opposes "I" from "me", subject from object, and absolute from relative. Language is the source of the residual mysticism in thinking men whose ghost is laid, not by militant atheist repudiation, but by Socialist acknowledgment. God is the original sin of thinking man: it is confession that redeems.

Language and History

So almost indispensable is language to human thinking, to consecutive and consequential thinking, steered instead of buffeted by the changing moment, that it might almost be said that "language precedes thought", provided this does not lead to the idea of some clean break in the continuous evolution of brain in the animal world, or obscure the fact that thinking is only filtered feeling, implicit in multiple sensation. The faint, delicate human idea, the essence of abstract refinement, would be still-born unless wrapped at once in the woolies of words. Without words to catch thoughts on the wing they could not be recalled. Without words to give them shape and boundary, to box them up and nail them down, they could not be repeated. Language socialises thought, by making the thoughts of each the common property of all. And it capitalises thought, by investing it in words, in song and saga, in lore and literature, as the cumulative social inheritance of a past that is. Every child is born with a silver spoon in its mouth.

Fashioned out of the need to guide the unison or sequence of co-operative labour, the need for a substitute for signs when the hands are occupied, or when the back is turned, or in the dark, language is a tool of production. Above all, it is essential to the preservation and accumulation of knowledge, of the ways and means whose accumulation is history.

F. EVANS.

FEBRUARY issue will include these articles:

"What Will Socialism Be Like"
 "The Errors of Horatio" (Trotman)
 "What Causes Changes In Society?"
 "On Backward Countries"

FORUM

*Internal Journal
of the S.P.G.B.*

Correspondence and articles should be sent to **FORUM, S.P.G.B., 52, Clapham High St., London, S.W.4.** Subscriptions 12 months, 7/6d, 6 months 3/9d. Cheques and P.O.'s should be made payable to:- **E. Lake, S.P.G.B.**

FORUM enters its second quarter of publication. What can be said in retrospect of the first quarter? The first three issues contained a variety of articles written in varying styles. The feather lightness of "Innocents Abroad" contrasted with the weighty articles of Frank Evans both have critics and supporters, the latter especially among those who do not write. Evans' articles have obviously provoked some hard thinking, which is not a bad thing. It seems to us, however, that the basic challenge of Evans' article has, as yet, not been taken up. Similarly, it is surprising that we have received no criticism on the article "Socialism and the Ballot." It can reasonably be taken for granted that Comrade Canter is not persuaded that his views are completely accepted on this side of the Atlantic. And where are the critics of the Party's attitude to Trade Unionism. Formerly, this question never failed to provoke them to speak up at conferences and Party meetings. FORUM offers them the opportunity to state a case. Nevertheless, after a life of three months there are signs that FORUM is being taken for granted and is stimulating voluntary, and serious, contributions. This is encouraging. We shall endeavour to keep within the terms of reference laid down for us in what we publish, and if we deviate a little occasionally we shall assume that it is understood that there is a sound reason for doing so. FORUM has yet to develop its scope fully. How it will do this the future will show. We are certain that the potentialities of the Party are good enough to ensure a useful journal of high standards. It could become trivial, but we are also equally certain that the membership would not allow that.

H.W.

HEAD OFFICE FORUM

Saturday, January 10th 7.30 p.m.

"Is Our Approach to Propaganda Outdated?"

CRITICISM OF ARTICLE IN DECEMBER S.S.

IN my view, the article by Gilmac on "Progress and Culture" is likely to give a misleading impression of the Socialist attitude to this subject. I suggest that there is an alternative way of looking at it that is consistent with socialist principles. Such an alternative may take shape from an examination of some of the points in the article.

"One writer put in a nutshell what most people have in mind when he wrote: 'The result of progress has been to increase the knowledge and power of man.' We are immediately prompted to ask, But for what? For a houseful of gadgets or an atomic stockpile?"

This is a line of thought that is taken by many people other than Socialists. This, in itself, is no reason for opposing it, but you must remember what is usually behind it. People who speak of atom bombs and gadgets in the same breath are often preoccupied, not with the social conditions which produce atom bombs, but with decrying all scientific discovery and invention. Gilmac sees that it is dangerous for us to take the line that the horrors of modern war are a sort of evil result of progress. But does he also see that it is far more dangerous to extend our criticism of contemporary civilisation to such things as household gadgets? It is surely no function of the S.P.G.B. to advocate "the simple life" and to make innuendoes about things like household gadgets which, after all, most people think are desirable. Such a policy certainly can't help the case for Socialism and, if taken seriously, may get us a false reputation of being "back to nature" cranks.

Aboriginal Culture

"What a tragedy that the ugly hand of civilisation is already reaching out to envelop the last remnants of aboriginal culture and instead of rising cultural level and retaining the kindly and non-competitive characteristics, is going to sweep everything into the melting pot of greed, misery and violence."

What Gilmac says about aboriginal culture may be quite true. Undoubtedly there have been societies in which people have been in many ways much kinder, more affectionate and less competitive than is the case to-day. But why does he give us only one side of the picture? Are there no ways in which modern civilised man, of whom Gilmac has such a poor opinion, behaves better than the aborigine? And if some anthropologists are prepared to go into eulogies about the wonderful gentleness and kindness of primitive peoples, then there are others who will argue that modern man is just as gentle and kind in his own way. In Melanesian society, for example, it was customary that a man might approach a girl he fancied and demand to have sexual intercourse there and then. If she refused he could kill her and his tribe would sanction the action. At least our modern "melting pot of violence" would appear to be somewhat kinder in that respect. I also seem to recall something about cannibalism in primitive societies—or is it bad taste to bring this up? The knowledge that some of these

pleasant people had each other for dinner would tend to detract from their other qualities.

Fair Dealing

"How can we compare with advantage the general dishonesty of to-day with the simplicity and cheating in the diplomatic and secret services, and fair dealing of primitive people? The lying the arts of financial fiddling and share pushing, the trade trickery and lying posters? The honest and sincere stand a poor chance in modern civilisation."

I agree—we can't compare it with advantage because no real comparison is possible. If there is no property to steal then the question of honesty doesn't arise. People can neither be dishonest nor honest. Also, "fair dealing" is used in different senses in the above passage. The fair dealing of primitives could have had nothing to do with the sort of deals that we usually call fair or unfair. Compare, if you like, the social relations within the tribe then, and those within the family now. Then you will see that primitive people met just as hostile a reception when they wandered outside their tribe as modern men meet when they wander into business.

Food and Health

"A great deal of our food consists of embalmed abominations in tins or manufactured edibles that would make our forefathers turn in their graves."

Sorry, Gilmac, but if you had to eat in the way that most of your forefathers did, then you would soon want to come back to your embalmed abominations. Until quite recently, don't forget, people ate with their fingers, didn't worry much about garbage, and accepted the flies and the fleas as a matter of course. Say that food could be more wholesome, nourishing and free from adulteration, but *don't* imply that our forefathers were so much better fed. True, there is more disease of certain types than in the past, but that is partly because people can now be kept alive with it whereas formerly it killed them.

Increase in Comfort?

"If one compares the existence of the so-called unprogressive and uncultured savage with the existence of modern civilised man it is extremely doubtful on the whole if there has been progress in the pleasure, comfort and security of life."

Gilmac becomes less cautious later on and states "the result has not been an improvement in his general comfort and security." About security I agree. But is it true to say that there has been no improvement in comfort? To say so would seem to be the sort of propaganda that was criticised by Comrade Turner in the December issue—it creates the impression that conditions have grown worse and will continue to do so. This does not fit the facts of experience, so people are unimpressed.

Readers may think that I have gone out of my way to pick holes in what Gilmas wrote. I plead guilty. If, however, the views I have criticised are those of a majority of members, then the Party is in danger of identifying itself with a school of thought that has nothing to do with Socialism, and may even hinder it.

S.R.P.

THE NEW VISION

A HUMAN being is developed only by crystallisation of the sum total of his own experiences. Our present system of education contradicts this axiom by stressing preponderantly single fields of application.

Instead of extending our milieu, as the primitive man was forced to do, combining as he did in one person, hunter, craftsman, builder, physician, etc., we concern ourselves with one definite occupation, leaving other faculties unused.

Tradition and the voice of authority intimidate man to-day. He no longer dares to venture into certain fields of experience. He becomes a man of one calling; he no longer has first-hand experience elsewhere . . . His self-assurance is lost. He no longer dares to be his own physician, not even his own eye. The specialists—like members of a powerful secret society—obscure the road to all-sided individual experiences, the possibility for which exists in his normal functions, and the need for which arises from the centre of his being.

Often even the choice of a calling is determined by outside factors: a man becomes a confectioner or a cabinet-maker because there is a shortage of apprentices in those trades; he becomes a lawyer or a manufacturer because he can take over his father's business.

The accent lies on the sharpest possible definition of the single vocation, on the building up of specialised faculties; the "market demand" is the guide. Thus a man becomes a locksmith or a lawyer or an architect or the like, working inside a closed sector of his faculties . . .

Our whole system of education has hitherto been found wanting, notwithstanding our vocational guidance, psychological testing, measurement of intelligence. Everything functions—and functions alone—on the basis of the present system of production which recognises only motives of material gain. A "calling" means to-day something quite different from solidarity with the aims and requirements of a community. One's personal life goes along outside the "calling", which is often a matter of compulsion and is regarded with aversion.

The Future needs the Whole Man

Our specialised training cannot yet be abandoned at this time when all production is being put on a scientific basis. However, it should not start too soon and it should not be carried so far that the individual becomes stunted—in spite of all his highly praised professional knowledge. A specialised education becomes meaningful only if a man of integration is developed along the lines of his biological functions, so he will achieve a natural balance of his intellectual and emotional power instead of on those of an

outmoded educational aim of learning unrelated details. Without this aim the richest differentiations of specialised study . . . are mere quantitative acquisitions, bringing no intensification of life, no widening of its scope. Only a man equipped with the clarity of feeling and the sobriety of knowledge will be able to adjust to complicated requirements, and to master the whole of life. Working only from this basis can one find a plan of life which places the individual rightly within his community.

The present System of Production

All educational systems are the results of economic structure. In the frenzied march of the industrial revolution, the industrialists set up specialised schools to produce quickly the badly-needed specialists. These schools favoured the development of men's powers in only very few instances and offered no opportunity to penetrate to the essential kernel of things . . . To-day neither education nor production springs from an inner urge, nor from an urge to make products which satisfy the requirements of one's self and those of society in a mutually complementary way. Our modern system of production is imposed labour, mostly a mad pursuit, without plan in its social aspects; its motive is merely to squeeze out profits to their limit, in most cases a complete reversal of its original purpose.

Not only the working class finds itself in this position to-day; all those caught within the workings of the present economic system are basically just as badly off. At most there are slight degrees of difference. The chase after rewards in money and power influences the whole form of life to-day, even to the basic feelings of the individual. He thinks only of outward security, instead of concerning himself with his inner satisfaction. On top of this, there is the penning up of city dwellers in treeless barracks, the extreme contraction of living space. This cramping of living space is not only physical: city life has brought with it herding into barren buildings, without adequate open space.

How about Technical Progress ?

It might easily be judged from the foregoing remarks that the present system of industrial production, and especially our technical progress, is to be condemned. In fact there are numerous writers and politicians who suggest this. They mix the effect with the cause. In the 19th century, some people tried to make a right diagnosis but suggested a wrong therapy . . .

A similar mistake was made by the Ruskin-Morris circle in the 1880's. They found that industrial mass production killed quality in craftsmanship. Their remedy was to kill the machine, go back to handwork exclusively.

They opposed machines so strongly that to deliver their hand-made products to London, they ran a horse coach parallel with the hated railway. In spite of this rebellion against the machine, technical progress is a factor of life which develops organically. It stands in reciprocal relation to the increase in the number of human beings. That is its real justification. Notwithstanding its manifold distortion by profit interests, the struggle for mere accumulation and the like, we can no longer think of life without such progress. It is an indispensable factor in raising the standard of life.

The possibilities of the machine—with its abundant production, its ingenious complexity on the one hand, its simplification on the other, has necessarily led to a mass production which has its own significance. The task of the machine—satisfaction of mass requirements—will in the future be held more and more singly and clearly in mind. The true source of conflict between life and technical progress lies at this point. Not only the present economic system, but the process of production as well, calls for improvement from the ground up. . . . The common error to-day is that usually questions of efficiency are viewed from the technical and profit standpoint, without regard to organic considerations. The Taylor system, the conveyor belt and the like remain mistakes as long as they turn man into a machine, without taking into account his biological requirements for work recreation and leisure.

Not against Technical Progress

The solution lies accordingly not in working against technical advance, but—in exploiting it for the benefit of all. Through technique man can be freed, if he finally realises the purpose: a balanced life through the free use of his liberated creative energies . . . For not the form, not the amazing technical process of production, should engage our real interest, but the sound planning of man's life.

We are faced to-day with nothing less than the reconquest of the biological bases of human life. Only when we go back to these can we reach the maximum utilisation of technical progress in the fields of physical culture, nutrition, housing and industry—a thoroughgoing rearrangement of our whole scheme of life. For even to-day it is currently believed that less importance than formerly needs to be attached to biological requirements, the motive power of life, thanks to our technically exact and calculable ways of dealing with them. It is thought that securing sleep by veronal, relieving pain by aspirin, can keep pace with organic wear and tear. In this direction progress of civilisation has brought along with it much beclouding of realities and grave danger. Apparent economies may easily deceive us.

But technical progress should never be the goal, only the means.

... The oncoming generation has to create a culture which does not weaken but strengthens the genuine biological functions.

The creative human being knows (and suffers from it) that the deep values of life are being destroyed under pressure of money-making, competition, trade mentality. He suffers . . . from the flattening out of his inheritance, from the impairing of his biological balance.

And yet, although the present social structure is a thoroughly unsuitable medium for the balanced outlet of human capacities, in the private life of individuals some glimpses of a functional understanding have already appeared.

The intellectual advances in art, literature, the theatre and the moving-picture in our time, and the various educational movements have given important indications of this fact. Likewise the interest in physical culture and in recreation and leisure, and in systems of treatment by natural rather than chemical methods.

Such efforts, taken as a whole, portend a world which even to-day shows its initial stages at many points. But no small unit of this growth should be studied as an isolated fact. Not the occupation, not the object to be manufactured, should be put in the foreground, but rather the recognition of man's organic functions. . . . Thus we lay the organic basis for a system of production whose focal point is man, and not profit interests.

Everyone is talented

Every healthy man has a deep capacity for bringing to development the creative energies found in his nature, if he is deeply interested in his work.

Everyone is equipped by nature to receive and assimilate sensory experiences. Everyone is sensitive to tones and colours, has sure touch and space reactions, etc. This means that by nature everyone is able to participate in all the pleasures of sensory experiences, that any

healthy man can also become a musician, painter, sculptor, architect, just as when he speaks, he is a "speaker". That is, he can give form to his reactions in any material (which is not, however, synonymous with "art" which is the highest level of expression in any period). The truth of this statement is evidenced in actual life: in a perilous situation or in moments of inspiration conventions and inhibitions of the daily routine are broken through, and the individual often reaches a plane of achievement otherwise not expected.

The work of children and of primitive peoples offers another proof. Their spontaneous expressions spring from an inner sense of what is right, as yet unshaken by outside pressure. They are examples of a life governed by inner necessities. So if we consider that anyone can achieve expression in any field, even if it is not at first objectively his best outlet, or essential for society, we may infer with still greater certainty that it must be possible for everyone to comprehend works already created in any field.

Such receptivity develops by stages, according to disposition, education, mental grasp and so forth, but that the essential is attainable sooner or later is beyond doubt. . . . Then no work—as is often the case to-day in industrial production with its endless subdivision—can be felt as the despairing gesture of a man being submerged . . .

There is no more urgent problem than that of realizing this desire to use man's powers to their maximum. For the last 130 years or so, we have been thinking about the problem, talking about it, and attempting to act on it. Our practice even to-day is at best a statement of belief, and not a realisation. Partial solutions cannot be commended; we are now too deeply implicated in our industrial society. Partial rebellion is only an evidence of the monstrous pressure, a symptom. Only the person who understands himself, and co-

operates with others in a far-reaching programme of common action, can make his efforts count. Material motives may well provide the occasion for an uprising, for revolution, but they can never be the deciding cause.

The revolutionist should always remain conscious that the class struggle is in the last analysis, not about capital, nor the means of production, but in actuality it concerns the right of the individual to a satisfying occupation, work that meets the inner needs, a normal way of life and a real release of human powers.

The Task for Education

Utopia? No, but it is a task for tireless pioneers. . . . At this point the educational problems merges into the political, and is perceptible as such in so far as a man goes into actual life and must make his adjustment to the existing order.

... We need an integration of intellectual achievements in politics, science, art, technology, in all the realms of human activity. We need Utopians of genius . . . not this time to sketch the broad outlines of an easily imaginable technical Utopia, but to foreshadow the existence of the man of the future, who, in the instinctive and simple, as well as in the complicated relationships of life, will work in harmony with the basic laws of his being Our time is one of transition striving towards a synthesis of all knowledge. A person with imagination can function now as an integrator. Of course, for the time being, he has to put aside all wishes for the thoroughgoing complexity which only a mature time can offer. He must be merely a vital pioneer on the vast and unbroken territories of our period. Here every action can lead to a creative solution.

The above extract from the works of L. Moholy-Nagy, co-founder of the Bauhaus School of Design at Dessau, near Dresden, Germany, which, on the coming to power of Hitler, moved to Chicago.

HEREDITY AND ABILITY

A further plea for clarity

From the pen of Comrade F. Evans flows a pedantic complexity, a mass of doubtful aphorisms interspersed among sentences of unnecessary difficulty. Historical materialism becomes an obscure verbal fog. The best service that can be offered to FORUM readers is to draw a veil over the whole conglomeration; and give it as quiet and as decent a burial as possible.

I propose to deal, therefore, with only one statement, which appears in Evans' last paragraph, viz.: "The rich genetically determined variation in innate individual abilities . . . cannot be dismissed without dismissing the basis of biological evolution."

The contribution of introspective psychology

To the student, psychology must represent an extraordinary confusion of conflicting theory, not only dealing with mental phenomena, but more particularly concerning the relation of mind to brain. Continually we are brought up against a dualist conception of mind and matter. Much has been made of alleged innate dispositions and inherited types. Thus William James divided people into "tender minded" and "tough minded"; Jung produced the theory of the introvert and extrovert, subsequently elaborated by McDougall; until finally we are told that individuals fluctuate between extroversion and

introversion. By this stage, the theories of types of mind are becoming threadbare.

The conception of fixed intelligence levels has followed a similar development. It is claimed levels of intelligence vary innately. Intelligence tests give intelligence quotients—I.Q.'s. These serve as kinds of permanent mental labels. Psychologists are unabashed by cases of children who do not substantiate this dogma, subsequent improvement in I.Q. being "explained" by the theory of the late developer. A late developer is said to have overcome deep-seated emotional conflicts, abnormal temperamental characteristics, and so forth. We are indebted to Spearman for the vanity of the two factor theory, in which an

Intelligent factor—vaguely called “g”, is said to pervade all activities, but that individuals possess other innate aptitudes. There is some agreement that these include memory, verbal and linguistic, mechanical, arithmetical, geometrical, manual, musical and drawing aptitudes.

The genes by now are carrying a heavy responsibility, but let it be noted that not one single piece of objective evidence exists in support of the genetic theory of the inheritance of special abilities.

Behaviourism

The methods of Pavlov in studying the conditioned reflexes in animals led to the development by Dr. J. B. Watson of an entirely new approach to the study of mental phenomena. Behaviourism is the study of behaviour in an objective way, by methods as used in physics, physiology, etc., in the observation, measurement and comparison of physical facts. Watson claims the study of consciousness or mind, as distinguished from brain, has no place in science. Mind, the function of the brain, is built upon a practically blank sheet by an accumulation of conditioned reflexes. He argues that newly born infants exhibit a relatively simple list of embryological responses. Laboratory tests show that they are fairly uniform among healthy infants. The implication of the behaviourist is that heredity counts for nothing in determining individual abilities.

Physical considerations

It is known that all atoms continually exhibit a disorderly heat motion, which is in opposition to their orderly behaviour. Events happening between a small number of atoms cannot be brought within the compass of any recognisable laws. Only in the co-operation of enormously large numbers of atoms do the statistical laws of physics and chemistry operate.

Schrödinger states: “All the physical and chemical laws that are known to play an important part in life of organisms are of this statistical kind; any other kind of lawfulness and orderliness that one might think of, is being perpetually disturbed and made inoperative by the unceasing heat motion of the atoms.” (p. 8, *What is Life?*)

Thought processes, involving as they do large numbers of atoms, can be explained only in terms of statistical laws. To the materialist, mind is a function of an organism, yet some “materialists” regard mental facts and physical facts as two aspects of one whole. We might equally speak of digestive facts and physical facts. If innate structural variations produce special abilities, applied to the brain this would mean innate variation in mental capabilities. Some individuals could be endowed with innately superior thought mechanisms. Anyone who believes this must be seriously disturbed by the Socialist case regarding leaders.

All human beings are built fundamentally on the same structural pattern, and I would suggest that slight variations in innate structure, bearing in mind the statistical character of life processes, do not rigidly limit the basic processes. Let us consider a simple example. The final of the Olympic Games 100 metres event in 1948 and 1952 showed that the six finalists in each case produced performances that were almost identical. Yet they all differed in height, weight, pulse rate, length of limb, size and length of muscles, etc. Their slight differences in performance cannot be explained in terms of their structural variations; for were the same runners to meet a day or week later a different result would probably occur, as is frequently the case. This can only be explained on the basis that they all experienced similar environment, e.g., special athletic training. Similar results accrue where there is an approximation to like behaviour and environment.

What a physiologist says

Speaking of the training of athletes, J. M. Tanner, of the Sherrington School of Physiology, giving the Crookes Lecture of 1952, says (p.6 Athletics, 29.3.52): “. . . having got them trained, I want to discuss why there should be a difference between them. This depends on the innate structure, and we know very little about the difference in structure between one person and another. We know almost nothing about one of the most important differences, which is in glandular functions.” It is pertinent to ask: if we know very little about structural difference and almost nothing about one of the most important differences, how do we know differences in performance can depend on innate structure?

A speculative suggestion

“The hardening and solidification of the human skull are retarded longer than in other animals, to allow of the greater expansion of the brain. At the same time, man is born with relatively few inherited instincts. There are, that is to say, comparatively few precise movements and responses which our nervous system is adjusted to promote automatically; man's instincts are for the most part very generalized tendencies . . . the human child has to ‘learn by experience’ the appropriate response to a specific situation. It must find out the right movements to make in relation to any external event, and build up in its brain the appropriate responses to a specific situation. It must find out the right movements to make in relation to any external event, and build up in its brain the appropriate connections between sensory and motor nerves”.

V. Gordon Childe, p. 27, *Man Makes Himself*.

It is true that, though there is objective evidence that environment overlays completely the simple response of early infancy, there is little systematised knowledge of the effect environment has upon growth and structure. It is sufficient in my view, however, to suggest that human beings are innately equal in potentiality.

R. BOTT.

A PLEA FOR PATIENCE

THE criticism made by comrade Brown in his “Plea for Clarity” is worth discussing in its general as well as its particular application, and I should like to deal with his criticism of my article rather as a pointer to the general question of our use of FORUM.

I agreed to put forward a summary of my views on certain matters in about 2,000 words, knowing that the attempt might well evoke the kind of criticism he makes, and for this reason I asked for space to develop a little further the propositions so briefly summarised. The reader was warned at the outset—in the editorial note, by the sub-heading “Introduction”, and specifically by the statement that “the propositions here put forward have to be compressed . . .”, so as to allow the reader to defer criticism until explanation had been given of what had had to be “left unexplained” (Point C.) Moreover, in this

introduction, regard was had to the courtesies, as it were, of the “opening number”, which further limited the space available for explanation. It is truer than he knows that I “knew not what to say and what to leave unsaid”.

The result was “obscurity”. But I think part of the obscurity is due also to comrade Brown's not bringing to its reading the intelligence he asks to be credited with. I don't agree that failure to be understood lies always “with the writer”. There are all sorts and degrees of faults in writing, but there are also sorts and degrees of co-operation by the reader. Even Marx (who wrote quite well, and whose genius is more widely acknowledged than mine) had to “pre-suppose, of course, a reader . . . willing to think for himself”. The value of the FORUM lies in its raising the level of responsibility of our own discussion (because it is on record) nearer to that of the

“S.S.”, but it takes two to make discussion, and the quality of the reading is as important as the quality of the writing. No statement can be correct to more than three places of decimals, and it is up to the reader to make the willing effort to make sense of what is written. Making debating capital out of verbal deficiencies is good exercise for children, but even after fifty years of it some of us would prefer to be treated not as children but as members having a common acquaintance with the elements of Party theory, an acquaintance shared by comrade Brown himself notwithstanding his faulty presentation of some of them in points B, D, E and H. (The Writers' Class might like to take his reply to H and find the ambiguity in the first sentence, and its apparent conflict—whichever way intended—with the second sentence; or to find the misquotation in point C and discuss whether it matters.)

Some of comrade Brown's points are dealt with in sections of my statement not yet issued, but I am here concerned to deal with them only as illustrating the failure to co-operate in reading which could lower the FORUM to the level of a newspaper. The reply to A, for instance ("We are discussing our own position"), ignores the context, and the phrase "our own", which indicate that we are subjecting our theory to more critical scrutiny than we have done in the past. I may still be mistaken (though we didn't always have the weekly forums or the FORUM), but if it is so, it reflects the opposite of comrade Brown's complacent acceptance of our unchanging rightness, and more modesty in our "claim to have accurate knowledge of society". Or take G, where I was implying that there may be significant differences between Marx's time and ours: if this is not conceivable to a reader it's no fault of the writer. He has something in A, however, where he asks what were the "certainties" of the nineteenth century, and the "consolidation of revolution achieved", as these were not explained (and the whole paragraph is a mess). But under stress of compression a writer may assume some knowledge to be more general than in fact it is, or take a chance that the exceptional reader may still get the drift. For the sake of brevity,

too, we may use the present indicative to include both past and future, in relation to continuing historical processes. We may say, "State Capitalism establishes (the technique)", and are entitled to assume the reader can distinguish this from "has established", especially where the context is freely sprinkled with the word "begins" (used five times in close sequence to make assurance more than twice doubly sure).

Clarity, admittedly, is the first requirement of communication, but comrade Brown knows, as an intelligent writer, that some things can be said more simply than others. He knows that among the harder things to deal with simply are the abstract things of social science. He should know that thinking takes place at varying levels of generalisation, and that the Party's theory and propaganda—because our job is to see the wood rather than the trees—involves a higher level of generalisation than the unsuitability of jam as a lubricant. He should know that a brief summary of critical propositions is likely to place a heavier strain on the reader's effort particularly when, through nobody's fault, it appears in penny numbers at intervals. He should credit his comrades as writers with the common intelligence he claims for them as readers and assume they will not write, nor editors publish, a

meaningless statement, and that where the meaning eludes we should look for the misprints, look again for the meaning, then construct any possible meaning, before giving up.

Comrade Brown wasn't trying.

He may say that his points haven't all been answered. Some will be. I am mainly concerned to add to his reasonable plea for clarity in writing a plea for responsibility in reading. The FORUM editors have neither the same power nor the same duty as have the Ed. Comm. of the "S.S." to determine what is published, and it rests with the reader, as critic, how far the FORUM repeats the cap-snatching ankle-tapping buffoonery of our playground days. There is no wish to undermine comrade Brown's serious pride in our (or his) accurate knowledge of society when I suggest, after somebody, that for purposes of discussion "it is sometimes more important that a statement should be interesting than that it should be finally true". Nor do I overlook that in addition to accurate knowledge "pepper and vinegar besides are very good indeed". Nor that taking the mickey is fair enough. But this is a seasoning, not a staple, and is best written in invisible ink between the lines.

F. EVANS.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON PROPAGANDA

In December, 1951, Paddington Branch sent out a questionnaire to members asking for certain information connected with Party propaganda. This was the outcome of discussion in the Branch, including a verbal quiz which helped in the wording of the final draft. We sent our nearly 200 forms, mostly reply-paid, for distribution through Branch Secretaries. Owing to the decision of the Executive Committee not to allow us to use the Register of Members, we were obliged to ask members who joined earlier than 1950 to participate. This, however, did not affect the purpose of the questionnaire, since we addressed it to newer members mainly because it was thought they would be able to recall better the circumstances and sequence of ideas that made them Socialists.

Fifty-five replies were received and the following is an analysis of the results (to nearest 1%):

Question 1. Your Form A asked how you came in contact with the Party, but this is not necessarily when you first came to agree with its case. When did you become convinced?

By personal contact	46%
At an S.P.G.B. outdoor meeting	28%
By reading an S.P.G.B. pamphlet	10%
By reading the S.S.	9%
At an indoor meeting	4%
Others	3%

Question 2. What were your political views just before you became a Socialist?

Not corresponding to any single party line	33%
Supporter of other party (11 Lab., 3	

Com., 1 Anarcho-syndicalist	29%
Member of other party (3 Lab., 4 Com., 1 I.L.P. and 1 B.U.F.)	19%
Not interested in politics at all	19%

Question 3. What aspect of our propaganda most helped to make you a Socialist?

That explaining the economics of Capitalism	56%
Criticising the policies of opponents	15%
Concerning what Socialism will be like	11%
Attitude to war	6%
Explanation of religious ideas	3%
Others	9%

Question 4. What part of our case did you find most difficult to accept?

Getting majority to understand and want Socialism	46%
Our hostility towards all other parties	15%
Opposition to religious ideas	13%
Concerning what Socialism will be like	11%
Question of leadership	4%
Marxian analysis of Capitalism	2%
Attitude to State Capitalism	2%
Others	7%

Question 5. What type of article do you think the S.S. should contain more frequently than now?

Socialist view of current world events	38%
Explaining parts of our case in detail	19%
Replies to correspondents	14%
Answering general opposition, reporting debates	12%
Examining opponents' theories and practice	8%
Parables, articles with humorous flavour	6%
Others	3%

Suggested interpretation of results

These are some of the factors that should be taken into account when trying to interpret the results:

Question 1. The information given and expressed are those of only a minority of Party members; it is possible that those of the majority would give an entirely different picture.

Question 2. Difficulties in distribution meant that certain branches encouraged their members to reply, while others apparently ignored the questionnaire. Certain branches' opinions therefore are over-represented, others not represented at all.

Question 3. The percentages are very arbitrary, e.g., one member's views make a difference of 2% or 1% if the answer is sub-divided.

Question 4. The phrasing of the suggested answer may affect the results, e.g., it may be less restricted in meaning than others and therefore preferred.

Question 5. The results may unduly favour the first suggested answer or answers, particularly to questions asking for opinions.

In spite of these and many other difficulties and possible objections, we think it is possible to draw certain conclusions and, in the light of the results, to make some suggestions concerning our propaganda. In a future issue we shall outline these, and also deal with the answers to the open question which asked for members' views on the content of our propaganda.

PADDINGTON BRANCH.